

**SUMMARY OF THE
ACCREDITING AUTHORITY COMMITTEE MEETING
JUNE 30, 1999**

The Accrediting Authority Committee of the National Environmental Laboratory Accreditation Conference (NELAC) met on Wednesday, June 30, 1999, at 8:30 a.m. Eastern Daylight Time (EDT) as part of the Fifth NELAC Annual Meeting in Saratoga Springs, NY. The meeting was led by its chair, Mr. John P. Anderson of the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency, Division of Laboratories. A list of action items is given in Attachment A. A list of participants is given in Attachment B. *The purpose of the meeting was to review the current status of Chapter 6, discuss any changes to the chapter, and address new issues.*

INTRODUCTION

The committee members introduced themselves to the audience. The new members, Mr. George Krisztian and Ms. Veronica Rath, who will be joining the committee after this conference, also introduced themselves to the audience.

PROPOSED CHANGES TO CHAPTER 6

The proposed changes to the current version of Chapter 6 were reviewed. Most of the proposed changes to the current standard are editorial and are in response to comments received from the State of Wisconsin.

Section 6.3.3.1.1.d: This section was added at the request of the National Database Committee. The requirement is that accrediting authorities must submit updates to the National Environmental Laboratory Accreditation Program (NELAP) database at least every two weeks. This includes reporting even if no changes have occurred to the accreditation status of any laboratories. (It is anticipated that a “no change” report would be a simple statement, possibly via Email, that no changes have occurred.) The intent is to provide physical evidence that the information in the NELAP database is periodically reviewed and is up-to-date.

The following comments were made about this section:

- The States should be asked if they would have problems submitting reports to the database every two weeks.
- Reporting every two weeks is too frequent. The requirement should be that only changes be reported within two weeks after the accrediting authority has made them. This committee should be telling the database committee when to update.
- The database should have a field associated with every laboratory containing the date this information was last updated.
- Since many are not familiar with database technology, it is unclear how much work reporting to the database will entail. It would be helpful if the National Database Committee could present how the reporting will actually work and to spell out the amount and type of information to be submitted, especially when a change occurs.

- The intent was to have a frequent reporting interval because of issues regarding secondary accreditation.
- An issue is that the requirement must be auditable, requiring reporting after a change occurs may not be auditable because of different interpretations as to what constitutes a change.
- The amount of changes in laboratory accreditation status that an accrediting authority must process depends of the size of the State's program.
- The National Database Committee has proposed having automatic notification to secondary accredited bodies if the accreditation status of the primary accredited body changes.

The consensus of the committee is to retain the existing proposed language in Section 6.3.3.1.1

Proposed Addition of Section 6.11

The proposed language for Section 6.11 is to address the need for an oversight committee and a review process of the accrediting authorities to address the concern about regional differences in NELAP recognition of accrediting authorities. This is a key issue for reciprocity among States. These revisions also specify how the oversight committee will be selected to avoid a conflict of interest regarding review of the NELAP process for reviewing accrediting authorities seeking renewal of NELAP recognition. Finally, an annual review should be performed and the finding made public.

It was pointed out that none of the members of the Accrediting Authority Committee would be eligible to become members of the oversight committee and it may not be appropriate for the Director of NELAP to appoint members of the oversight board.

The comment was made that the Accrediting Authority Review Board (AARB) could serve to create or perform the functions of the oversight board. A benefit of AARB performing the oversight is that it eliminates the need to create another committee. For AARB to perform the oversight, the requirements for how AARB members are selected may need to be reviewed to ensure it is an independent body. Also, the standards would need to be modified to include this oversight as one of the AARB's responsibilities.

The consensus of the committee is that no changes to this section will be offered for vote at NELAC V. The committee will work with the AARB and the Program Policy and Structure Committee to develop language for Chapter 1 that specifies how future AARB members are selected. In general, potential members will be selected from a pool of candidates and the NELAP Director will appoint the members.

The framework for this language includes a nomination process involving (1) the NELAC Board of Directors, (2) the Environmental Laboratory Advisory Board (ELAB), and (3) the Accrediting Authority Committee for development of a list of nominees for the AARB from which the NELAP Director will select and appoint AARB members. In addition, language will be developed providing for management systems review of the process used to recognize accrediting

authorities under the NELAC/NELAP umbrella. The standards used in this review will include appropriate international standards and the NELAC Standard itself.

Proposed Changes to Section 6.10

The proposed changes to the language in Section 6.10 were reviewed. These changes were proposed by the AARB to help the AARB more efficiently carry out its duties.

Section 6.10.a: Editorial changes were made to the proposed language.

Section 6.10.c: This suggested language was added because it may not be necessary to review the entire record, which may be very large. The proposed language was revised to state that: *The AARB shall carry out an independent review of all relevant parts of the record.* The comment was made that criteria for the review process should be specified to ensure consistency in the review process. Suggested language will be submitted for consideration at the next interim conference.

Section 6.10.d: This language was added because the AARB may not need to talk to all members of the NELAP assessment team. Editorial changes were made to the proposed language.

Section 6.10.f: The intent of allowing an extension of time is to make the appeals process more flexible. The committee set a maximum length of 60 days for the extensions.

The comment was made that Chapter 6 does not specify that the accrediting authority still has NELAP recognition during the appeal process. The committee addressed this by adding Section 6.10.i.

Section 6.10.i: This section was added to the proposed language: *Upon filing an appeal, the status existing prior to the decision will remain in effect pending resolution of the appeal.*

**ACTION ITEMS
ACCREDITING AUTHORITY COMMITTEE MEETING
JUNE 30, 1999**

Item No.	Action	Date to be Completed
1.	The committee will work with the AARB to develop language for Chapter 1 that specifies how future AARB members are selected.	Ongoing

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ACCREDITING AUTHORITY COMMITTEE MEETING
JUNE 30, 1999**

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